

Transforming Adversity into the Path

By Pierre Zimmerman

We are often consumed by the many trials and disappointments life brings us. It is therefore important to learn how to transform the valleys and peaks of life into spiritual growth. The more we disregard the power of our attitudes, we end up blaming our suffering and dissatisfaction on factors outside of ourselves, and the world thereby seems increasingly hostile. The more we become consumed by negative attitudes, the more we actually attract non-beneficial circumstances. We have a tendency to focus on others and their faults, speak of them, and in the process harm ourselves.

There are ways to shift our attitudes towards the events of our lives, troubles, or any irritation by changing our harmful and undesirable views. Transforming adversity can bring courage and enthusiasm to change the difficult life conditions into something of spiritual benefit. Every time we express hostility or discomfort, we are expressing ignorance. Shantideva said, "If a problem can be remedied, why be troubled about it? If the problem cannot be eliminated, what is the point of fretting about it?"

Refraining from craving, decreasing our attachment to gain and aversion to loss, good and bad reputation, fame or shame, we can replace these things with more meaningful priorities. Often the practice of insight, developing lovingkindness and compassion removing arrogance and fostering humility.

Instead of reacting to others and the negative qualities that consume us, we have a choice to respond in a way that does not create conflict, anxiety, resentment or rage. Reactions are imbalances of the mind that affect our body as well. Transforming adversity into spiritual growth can be accomplished with the mind by meditating on impermanence, focusing on contentment and the path, and not defining events as felicity or adversity. Each moment is a perfect opportunity to cultivate stability, equanimity, patience and wisdom in a wholesome way with a life-affirming stance that brings about wellbeing and well-flourishing.

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